



Daily Stress Takes a Toll

Are you stressed out? Do even little every-day irritations like traffic jams and long waits at the supermarket make you flip out? *Relax*. They may seem harmless now, but a recent study found they can take a toll down the road.

Researchers at the University of California in Irvine wanted to gauge the effect of daily stress on long-term mental health. So they reviewed data on 711 men and women, ages 25 to 74, enrolled in national studies looking at how they handle daily emotional stressors. Things like arguments with a spouse or partner, work conflicts, standing in long lines and sitting in traffic.

The findings, published in *Psychological Science*, revealed participants who routinely lost their cool were more likely than their calmer colleagues to have anxiety or mood disorders 10 years later.

"How we manage daily emotions matters to our overall mental health," said lead study author Susan Charles, a professor of psychology and social behavior.

"We're so focused on long-term goals that we don't see the importance of regulating our emotions. Changing how you respond to stress and how you think about stressful situations is as important as maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine."

Her advice: It's important not to let everyday problems ruin your day. Try to keep things in perspective. Stuck in traffic? Listen to music — and chill. Angry at your boss or partner? Take a few deep breaths — and calm down. Worried about a deadline? Take a break. Exercise. Nap. Get some fresh air. You'll feel better, and the ideas will flow.

Meditation, yoga, getting enough sleep or getting professional help to learn stress coping techniques are just a few ways you can start controlling your stress today and prevent greater health problems in the future.

If you reach out to a behavioral health professional, they will teach you easy ways you can reduce stress at home and work. With less stress, you'll feel more relaxed and more in charge of your life.

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